

1 Interview Summaries

1.1 Houlton

Interview Type	Municipality
Interview Location	Phone Interview
Interview Date	October 20, 2001
Summary Date	December 12, 2001
Interviewer	Thomas Burns agismap1@maine.rr.com
Interviewed:	Peggy Daigle
	Staff Size (approx)
Budget (approx)	\$5,000,000
URL:	http://www.houlton-maine.com/

1.1.1 Agency Overview

The town of Houlton borders the province of New Brunswick, Canada. It is a State-of-Maine Service Center Coalition member. Houlton was incorporated in 1837 and serves as the County Seat of Aroostook County. Its tax-exempt properties represent fully 25% of its total \$51 million in valuation. Houlton hosts a medical center, numerous banks and is home to many professionals. It also has several large, stable businesses such as Smith & Wesson whose sales are surging in post 9/11 America.

1.1.2 GIS Initiatives

There are no GIS initiatives underway.

1.1.2.1 Overview of GIS Utilization

In 1987, an enterprising local surveyor created a non-referenced digital parcel composite complete with maplot identification labels. He attached the Tax Assessor's TRIO database to the parcel composite. It has not been updated since.

In 1992, a Public Works field crew used the composite to map catch basins that were plotted on the non-georeferenced parcel composite. The crew then developed a database with a unique identifier and created attributes such as visitations and condition. Public Works joined the database to the spatial points representing the catch basins. The original map composite is currently only used for the purpose of providing a background for the catch basin database.

1.1.2.2 GIS Operating Environment and Infrastructure

Houlton's Public Works Department runs GIS software called DACI, a visual CAD program produced by GeoResearch Systems, Inc of Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Houlton licenses no ESRI products. The primary use of the version of DACI that they run is to access their catch basin database.

Their Internet connection is a new wireless service offered by MFX (Maine Farmer's Exchange) that has proved to be inadequate for robust and constant staff use.

1.1.2.3 GIS Data Resources and Requirements

1.1.2.3.1 Spatial Data

Existing data sets include:

Non-georeferenced parcel composite.

Non-georeferenced catch basins.

Currently unavailable but desired data sets include:

Geo-referenced parcel composite.

1.1.2.3.2 Data Issues

The town manager indicated that some in Public Works consider OGIS data as 'inaccurate.' She elaborated that it was difficult for some to understand certain basics of data development such as input source scale.

1.1.2.4 GIS Applications and Application Requirements

- There are no GIS applications in use. The town manager's philosophy is that Houlton will never possess an in-house GIS capability and that the solution to the use of digital data would be through an Application Service Provider. Nothing short of a total outsource solution would meet with success.
- Any application having to do with Economic Development would be the most desirable for them to have.

Planned future GIS activity and applications:

Houlton is trying to wrap up a Comprehensive Plan begun in 1994. They realize that the maps prepared in 1994 are out-of-date. The Northern Maine Development Commission has a contract to help Houlton complete the Plan using extant OGIS datasets.

1.1.3 Other Relevant Issues

The Houlton Water Company, a municipally owned utility providing electricity, water, and wastewater services to Houlton has shown interest in GIS and would be sympathetic to any municipal initiatives.

1.1.4 Major Benefits and Cost Justification

There has been no cost and only minimal benefit from the two, legacy digital datasets.